

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 19052

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS-TH

SUBJ: LTG SAIYUD'S COMMENTS ON THE PRESENT SITUATION

LEADERSHIP DEFICIENCIES

1. IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE D/S COUNSELOR DECEMBER 4
LTG SAIYUD KERDPHOL, RTA DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF ANC CHAIRMAN
OF THE CSOC COORDINATING COMMITTEE, STATED THAT HE WAS
CONCERNED OVER WHAT HE CALLED THE CONTINUED LACK OF LEADERSHIP
AND DECISION MAKING "AT THE TOP LEVEL" OF THE RTG. THIS
CONTRASTED, HE SAID, WITH AN INCREASE IN COMMUNIST PARTY OF
THAILAND (CPT) ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITY BOTH IN RURAL AREAS
AND AMONG URBAN GROUPS, PARTICULARLY WORKERS. IN THE ABSENCE
OF FIRM DIRECTION FROM THE TOP, ACCORDING TO SAIYUD, THE
MORALE OF THE ALL-IMPORTANT MIDDLE AND LOWER LEVEL OFFICERS,
CIVILIAN AND MILITARY, ENGAGED IN COUNTER-INSURGENCY HAD
SUFFERED. HE COMMENTED THAT, ALTHOUGH SOME THAI HAVE SUGGESTED
HE SHOULD PLAY A MORE DYNAMIC ROLE IN THE PRESENT SITUATION,
HIS POWERS WERE FAR MORE LIMITED THAN THESE PERSONS REALIZED.

CSOC REORGANIZATION

2. SAIYUD SAID HE WAS STILL PRESSING TO HAVE CSOC REMOVED
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FROM THE ARMY CHAIN OF COMMAND, AND COMBINED WITH THE NATIONAL SECURITY COMMAND STRUCTURE DIRECTLY UNDER THE PRIME MINISTER. HE COMMENTED THAT, ALTHOUGH HE WAS SUPPORTED BY ARMY CHIEF KRIT SIVARA IN THIS, THE RTG SEEMED AS FAR AS EVER FROM A DECISION.

ROLE OF THE ARMY

3. SAIYUD SAID THAT THERE WERE DISAGREEMENTS WITHIN THE ARMY OFFICER CORPS OVER THE ROLE THE ARMED FORCES SHOULD PLAY IN THIS PRESENT STAGE OF "BUILDING DEMOCRACY". THESE DISAGREEMENTS HAD BECOME EXACERBATED IN RECENT WEEKS AS DISSATISFACTIONS AND UNREST, MANIFESTED IN MULTIPLYING STRIKES, HAD INCREASED. SAIYUD SAID THAT HE PERSONALLY FELT CLOSE COOPERATION BETWEEN INTELLECTUALS AND THE ARMY WAS ESSENTIAL IF PROGRESS TOWARD DEMOCRATIC RULE WAS TO BE MADE. HE ARGUED THAT THE MAIN ROLE IN "BUILDING" DEMOCRACY MUST BE RESERVED TO THE INTELLECTUALS WHILE THE ARMY SHOULD RESTRICT ITSELF TO "PROTECTING" DEMOCRACY. HIS THOUGHTS ON THIS SUBJECT HAD BEEN INCORPORATED IN A PAPER WHICH, HE FEARED, MIGHT BE ILL RECEIVED BY SOME OFFICERS UNWILLING TO ACCORD SUCH A MAJOR ROLE TO INTELLECTUALS.

ARMY REFORMS

4. SAIYUD SAID THAT MANY IDEAS FOR IMPROVING THE ARMED FORCES HAD BEEN BROUGHT UP OVER THE YEARS BUT TOO LITTLE ACCOMPLISHED. AS EXAMPLES HE GAVE THE FOLLOWING:

A) THE RTA PERSISTS IN HABITS OF THINKING SUITED MORE TO CONVENTIONAL WARFARE AND EXTERNAL ATTACK THAN TO DEALING WITH THE ACTUAL DANGER POSED BY THE CPT-DIRECTED INSURGENTS. HE NOTED THAT THE 1973 RTA FORCE STRUCTURE PLAN GIVES LIP SERVICE TO THE NEED FOR THE RTA TO GIVE PRIORITY TO COUNTER-INSURGENCY YET THE PLAN ITSELF DISCUSSES ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY THE ALLEGED THREAT OF EXTERNAL ATTACK FROM THE DRV OR THE CPR.

B) ONE RESULT, SAIYUD SAID, WAS A MILITARY FORCE WITH AN INFLATED COMMAND STRUCTURE TYING UP MEN
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AND RESOURCES AT THE REGIONAL MILITARY CIRCLES, THE ARMY AREA COMMANDS AND THE DIVISIONS. THESE RESOURCES WOULD BE BETTER UTILIZED IF APPLIED MORE DIRECTLY AGAINST THE INSRUGENCY, HE SAID.

C) SAIYUD CALLED FOR A RE-EXAMINATION OF THE INDUCTION AND RECRUIT TRAINING SYSTEM. HE SAID THAT THERE WERE

INDICATIONS THAT SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF SOLDIERS HAD BEEN SO ALIENATED BY THEIR TREATMENT DURING MILITARY SERVICE THAT AFTER DISCHARGE AND RETURN TO REMOTE VILLAGE HOMES THEY HAD BECOME VULNERABLE TO CPT RECRUITMENT. HE SUGGESTED INDUCTION OF FEWER NUMBERS AND MORE EMPHASIS ON FAIR TREATMENT, INCLUDING THE SETTING UP OF SOME SYSTEM UNDER WHICH SOLDIERS CAN COMMUNICATE "COMPLAINTS" TO THEIR SUPERIORS.

COUNTER-INSURGENCY

5. SAIYUD SAID HE IS ADVOCATING AN END TO JOINT TRAINING EXERCISES SUCH AS JTX 17 NOW BEING CONDUCTED. HE SAID THE MASSING OF MANPOWER IN THESE EXERCISES WAS EXPENSIVE AND INEFFICIENT. HE PROPOSES THAT ACTUAL TRAINING EXERCISES BE SEVERELY RESTRICTED AND THAT THE SAVINGS THUS MADE BE APPLIED TO THE CONDUCT OF SMALL UNIT OFFENSIVE ACTIONS AGAINST THE CT.

6. HE WOULD ALSO RE-EXAMINE THE ROLE OF CERTAIN SPECIALIZED UNITS, SUCH AS SPECIAL FORCES, TO SEE IF THESE COULD NOT BE MORE EFFECTIVELY UTILIZED AGAINST THE CT.

COMMENT

7. SAIYUD'S DESCRIPTION OF MISGIVINGS AMONG SOME RTA OFFICERS OVER CURRENT TRENDS ACCORDS WITH OTHER INDICATIONS WE HAVE RECEIVED AND IS TO BE EXPECTED. WHETHER OR NOT THAILAND CAN PASS SAFELY THROUGH THE DIFFICULT STAGE OF RE-ESTABLISHING CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT AND SOME MEASURE OF REPRESENTATIONAL RULE, AND OF ADDRESSING THE MYRIAD SOCIAL INJUSTICES THAT HAVE ACCUMULATED OVER THE YEARS, WILL DEPEND TO A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE ON THE INFLUENCE WHICH OFFICERS LIKE SAIYUD CAN EXERCISE.

8. SAIYUD'S CONCEPTS REGARDING ARMY RE-ORGANIZATION AND COUNTER-CONFIDENTIAL

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INSURGENCY ARE SOUND BUT IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THEY HAVE YET GAINED THE NECESSARY CURRENCY WITHIN THE RTA FOR THEM TO BE ACCEPTED AS DOCTRINE.

9. WE ARE NOW PREPARING AN ASSESSMENT OF THE INSURGENCY TOGETHER WITH RECOMMENDATIONS ON WHAT, IF ANYTHING, WE SHOULD DO ABOUT IT. THIS REPORT WILL BE FORWARDED WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.

KINTNER

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